5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

789 away, leaving it alone, an ear of yellow corn is left with it, that its soul may not be stolen. There is an interesting parallel here with [171] the ear of corn as a "ceremonial mother" in the Southwestern United States. If somebody expresses too strong admiration of a child, fire must be passed near it, or spittle rubbed over its forehead; otherwise the baby will become ill. Infants are particularly susceptible to the evil eye. To cure one that has been thus cursed, a female shaman is summoned, who passes a whole egg all over the baby's body. This is then opened, and the evil eye will be seen (by the shaman) in the yolk of the egg. They throw the egg into the river, or bury it in a secret place. Almost this same belief was found in Chontal of Tabasco. (Customs of San Fernando, Chapter VI, Volume I).

868 Children's education is simple and direct. As soon as a boy is old enough to work at all—at about five years of age—he is given a worn-down machete and set to cutting and hauling wood. From then on, following his father, he learns the man's duties. Girls are started with a miniature metate, grinding corn.

872 The Government maintains some public schools, such as at Bachajon Village, in which a few children learn to read and write, but in general great difficulty is found in obtaining scholars. As soon as they are old enough to study, they are strong enough to be of material help in the house and the farm; the parents do not like to relinquish what represents the interest on the investment of the price paid by the father for marriage, and the expense of the children's early years. Under the present administration, however, efforts to educate the Indians are being pushed as never before.

881 Puberty is attended by no observances of any kind. Marriage,
582 which comes fairly early, has been previously described.

764 At death the ceremonial side is greatly emphasized. The funeral rites combine the idea of mourning with a general belief that the soul of the departed lingers for a brief time about his former domicile. When possible, the house of the deceased is abandoned for a short time, during which period, if any small animal is observed about the house, particularly at night, it is supposed to be his soul. No particular powers are ascribed to the soul, as far as could be found out, but it is considered poor company.

As it happened, a man was killed while we were at the Finca Encanto, whose funeral rites we could observe. His wife began mourning for him almost immediately—this being in the middle of the afternoon. His body was taken to another house, neighbour to his own. The true ceremonies began after nightfall. Accompanied [123] by Lazaro and Señor Aguilar, the writer went up with a gift of

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzaltal NV9.
Amatenango del Valle

Chapter 2

Traditional Economic Activities

The traditional occupation of every adult man is working in the milpa and of every adult woman, making pottery. The fiction is maintained that they do this work, even if they are actually engaged fulltime in some other activity. In response to the census question, "What is the work of the man or woman?" men answered universally that they were agriculturalists and women that they were potters. Men who work outside the community, in the fincas or in the sawmills, consider this a temporary means of gaining cash income and do not define themselves as sawyers or laborers for others. They work outside the community only when they do not have sufficient land to provide themselves with corn to eat and a surplus to sell, or when they must pay debts incurred by bethrothal or assumption of religious posts. Many women who do not make pottery for extended periods of time, or make it only for a special fiesta, still consider themselves pottery producers.

Persistence of the same occupations and the daily effort to make a living strengthen the link between generations and to tradition. The primary emphasis in child training is teaching both boys and girls to work efficiently and industriously in these traditional occupations. The techniques for codifying and perpetuating a given way of doing things, particularly evident in pottery production, provide clues to the way in which other kinds of behavior are schematized.

Agricultural Production

Agricultural production involves two areas of decision making: what to grow and when to schedule each activity related to production. Decisions in both these areas are based upon custom and time-proved results. I shall

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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perienced potter in the household, sometimes with the help of a trainee. Older women prefer doing the lighter tasks, such as putting on the handles and mouth or applying the slip of watered clay, to raising the sides which requires greater force and exertion of the back muscles. A second basis for the division of labor is the kind of item produced: older women for example, make bowls in preference to large water jugs and containers.

Learning to make pottery. A girl begins to make pottery about the age of eleven. First she makes small replicas of the articles her mother produces. Then, under her mother's direction, she learns to prepare the clay. The mother feels the clay with her fingers, telling her daughter to add more sand if this is lacking. She is taught to knead the clay three times. In making the pot, the most difficult phases are mixing the clay, forming the base, and rounding out the walls of the vessel as it is raised. The child is expected to learn slowly and is encouraged gently to improve each step. While the child works on her first pot, the mother makes a similar one; three or four times they exchange vessels, and the mother shapes her daughter's pot into a better form.

About two generations ago, marriages at the age of eleven or twelve were the rule. Since most of the intensive learning of pottery techniques begins at that age, pottery was taught to the bride by her mother-in-law if she resided in her husband's house (Blom and La Farge 1927). Most marriages now are contracted for girls from fourteen to seventeen years of age. By this time they are already proficient potters and accustomed to working with their mothers. Therefore there is greater stress on their remaining in or near the parental home after marriage.

The pottery is fired in the streets of the town outside the house, usually after the women have made four or five dozen items. The pots are set on planks forming a rough square around the fire in the center. Charcoal is added to the fire as the brush or corn husks set between the pots begin to burn. The women tend the pots, turning them every five minutes until the surface is well dried and hardened. Wood is added to the fire, and then the jugs are stacked in a pyramid, each one protected from the one it touches with a broken piece of pottery. The stacking is crucial to permit even firing and must be done carefully so that none are broken. Once the

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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must announce his arrival at the gate so that the mother can cover the child from view. In this period, the mother sleeps with the child apart from her husband. 846 [513]

Infants remain swaddled in wrapped skirt pieces—the woman's sash is not used after the first fifteen days—throughout the first year of life. Their arms are bound to their sides by kerchiefs crossed over the chest and drawn around the back with the ends tucked in; this makes it easier to carry the child on the back, wrapped in a large carrying cloth. Mothers sometimes lay sleeping infants on their bed when they are working in the house, but much of the time they carry them on their backs. 854

The child is given corn gruel to supplement nursing during his third or fourth month. Weaning may be consciously done after the child reaches the age of one and a half or two years. If the child persists in trying to nurse, the mother may put chile sauce or draw a face on her breasts to discourage him. 853 862

Much of the care of children from two to four years of age is done by elder siblings. Both girls and boys of from seven to ten years of age carry younger siblings in a carrying cloth on their backs, even when playing very active games. They pacify the child by holding a flower or twig for him to chew or grasp, and they usually share with him any cookies or scraps of food they are given. 855 857

School is commonly considered the most joyful time of a person's life. There the children, especially boys, make friendships which last throughout life. School recess is a time for unrestrained running, shouting, and laughter such as I have rarely seen in the houseyards when children play together. 871 857

In teaching their children how to work, parents are expected to inculcate not only competence but also a sense of the value of work, for industry is one of the most esteemed traits in both boys and girls. Small girls do errands for their mothers from the age of about four years. When a woman is occupied with pottery, she rarely disturbs herself to get needed items, but calls upon her children to fetch a pot which is out of reach or to bring water for the painting. She gives these orders in a quiet undertone, and I have never seen any need to prompt or cajole the child into fulfilling the errand. By the age of ten or eleven, girls begin to make small pots like 867 857 868 323

7t Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

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[323] the larger ones their mothers make, but their products are usually not commercially saleable until they reach the age of marriage. Their responsi-
[312] bility in preadolescence is to bring water from the faucets installed in every other block of the town, and to degrain corn, tend the fire as the *nixtamal*, or corn dough mixed with lime, cooks, and help their mother grind it. The careful assessment of the child's capacity to perform tasks is exemplified by the gradations of water-carrying jars given to each child: the older the child, the larger the jar, with minute variations in scale. The
[592] close, usually wordless cooperation between women in a household comes
[462] from years of working together and knowing their part in cooperative tasks.

Boys accompany their fathers to the fields after they reach the age of six and when they are not attending school. They do not participate in the work of the milpa until they are eight or older, but they pick up twigs for the fire or gather the wild berries or plants which supplement the diet of
[411] the family. They usually carry slingshots with which they kill field rats
[262] and birds, which they bring home to cook and eat. Teaching a boy the
868 tasks involved in agriculture is consciously undertaken by older brothers
241 or the father when the child reaches the age of twelve or thirteen. The following reminiscence of this training is given by a man who had been brought up by his widowed mother and brother.

159 *I went to the field with my brother who is eighteen years older than I,*
868 *when I was thirteen years old. My brother brought me to clean the milpa,*
241 *saying, "Let us go and you will learn how to work. See what I do and you do the same. You will learn what I do and you can do the same."*

One day I finished six rows. My brother said when he saw my work, "Good, just give a little more soil at the foot of the corn because the little corn must have a little soil. Now you do it well." "Yes," I said. He saw it was good, and he told me, "You have learned your work. You are going to forget it when you enter school. When you come out of school, go do two or three rows of work. When you hear the bell strike, go back to school."

He told my mother that I had learned to work, and she said, "Good you know how to cultivate." I learned to do my work better by going along with my elder brother in his work so that I would not forget.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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621 593 581 794 Familial role requirements must be fulfilled in order for public roles to be undertaken. A man must be married in order to enter into even the lowest posts in the civil and religious hierarchies.

794 556 434 554 Only in the case of the alfereces has wealth ever been a criterion for recruitment. These four officials had to be able to spend 3,000 pesos during their year in office. The heavy expenditures failed to give prestige to the official, and the display of wealth excited envy rather than respect. The result was that people called upon to accept the post had to be imprisoned before they would accept.

554 756 Recruitment to roles in almost all institutional contexts is based on innate qualities; special skills and knowledge are attributes acquired in office or other role positions rather than requirements for undertaking roles. Curers are recruited because they are recognized as having an animal spirit; they learn whatever skills are required after they have been initiated into the profession. The curers' special position in the society rests more on esoteric powers than on esoteric knowledge. Everyone in the community knows the herbs and medicines which are prescribed, and most men can give as comprehensive a taxonomy of illnesses as any practicing curer.

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868 241 [857] [883] Economic roles, though largely undifferentiated for each sex, are consciously learned and transmitted. Boys accompany their fathers or elder brothers to the field at about the age of eight and continue working with them until they reach independence. Observation of behavior alone would seem to indicate an unconscious absorption of the role of agricultural worker, but informants recount episodes in which training in field work was explicitly transmitted by their fathers or brothers, and formal approval of their ability to do the tasks announced to their mothers. Parents express fear that school attendance not only interferes with working in the milpa, but that it will cause the child to forget what he has learned in the field. Regardless of what other tasks a man performs, he thinks of himself as a farmer.

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868 323 Becoming a potter requires an even more explicit training procedure. The fine linguistic segmentation of each act and movement in the schedule of pottery-making is a clue to the explicit transmission of tasks by the

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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mother to her daughter. Informants are able to recount the succession of learning of the tasks, the relative difficulty of each task, and the mistakes they made and how their mother corrected them. Being a potter in Tzo'ontahal is as much a part of being a woman as the role of agriculturalist is of being a man.

Special tasks become crystallized as roles only when few people perform them. Jobs such as caponizing, butchering, net and rope weaving, and wood cutting which are done by almost every man do not have role terms. Bonesetting and curing of certain "good" illnesses, such as swelling caused by embarrassment, are semispecialized activities performed by a few women who have "cold" hands. Midwifery is a fully specialized role performed by two women who are referred to as "the grandmothers of the newborn child."

A new occupational role has been created with the purchase of a truck by Indians of the community. There are now two Indian truck drivers. Recruitment of these particular young men was a result of their fathers' importance in the truck-owning cooperatives, and their skill was acquired in apprenticeship with a Ladino truck driver hired when the truck was first in operation. Both of them are acculturated in clothing and speech. Since they have acquired skills in dealing with the Ladino world, they often act as intermediaries for Indians of the town in their negotiations in the market or the courts of the departmental capital.

The continuity in occupational adjustment from early childhood to adulthood contrasts with the discontinuities in assuming roles in the life cycle. Girls are not advised about menstruation until they see the first signs of it; they describe their reaction to it as one of fear and surprise. Often they have been pregnant several months before they are aware of the condition or its cause, and they have no preparation for the experience of childbirth before it is upon them. Boys are not considered men until they are married, but in order to arrive at this status, they must enter into the "fight to get a wife," as the betrothal is often called.

Since recruitment to roles in almost all institutional contexts is based on qualities of the person rather than acquired skills, failure to recognize the prerequisite conditions of age and experience undermines the validity of

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The behavior described for each institution in earlier chapters will be summarized as a mode of adjustment or adaptation in relation to the beliefs that give it meaning and purpose.

Economic Activities

Learning agricultural tasks and pottery-making in the household is part of adjusting to membership in the community. Parents are responsible for teaching the value of industriousness and are held accountable throughout the life of the child. Agricultural tasks are scheduled in a yearly cycle that provides sufficient flexibility for a man to carry out community and familial ceremonial responsibilities. In milpa agriculture, there is no specialization of tasks. Small-plot agricultural production with a simple technology has been reinforced by the land reform program. Since the lands incorporated under the Ejido Commission in the 1930s were attached to the community, agriculturalists were not forced to adjust to new ecological conditions. Politicalization was minimal since the local commission operated within the old civil hierarchy. In the recent expansion of ejido colonies in hot country, Indians from the community have developed alliances with non-Indians in asserting claims to the land. Without any preexisting civil hierarchy, these ejidatarios have not had to adjust their activities to a given structure of authority, but have developed independent political organizations as an adaptation to their new environment.

Women's work in pottery is less subject to changes in techniques and organization than is men's. The schema of production in simple tasks in a fixed sequence makes it easier to teach girls each process and reinforces a given pottery tradition. My guess would be that if wheel production were introduced, it would liberate the creativity of each potter by freeing her of established routines.

Pottery production is not surrounded, as is agricultural production, by ceremonials. There is no god to whom one lights candles or gives offerings to ensure success, although there are hazards in production, particularly at the time of firing. Agricultural productivity, on the other hand, is thought to depend on the proper relation between the spirits of the heaven and of the church with the spirits of crops.

In the new economic activities, the Indians have shown both adjustive

241 502 462 Each man tries to cultivate enough food to make his household self-sufficient the whole year around.

241 868 The younger males of a household are initiated into the agricultural work by their fathers and elder brothers who work with the household head in the same fields. Around the age of ten, they are expected to leave grammar school and the children's playground, and to start learning their life trade: the techniques of cultivation. [582] No young male is capable of marrying if he is not capable of bearing on his shoulders the economic burden of supporting a household with his labor in the fields.

241 433 434 In addition to producing enough corn for the consumption of his homestead, a man is expected to cultivate some surplus which the household can exchange in the local markets and stores for the manufactured goods and staples which they need: machetes, candles, needles, coffee and various other commodities. Moreover, [464] if the household is in need of extra cash to pay for the expenses of a burial, a wedding, or any other emergency expenditure, he is expected to earn it by selling his labor to other men in the village for wages, or by working for short periods of time in the sugar cane plantation of Pujiltic. (Usually between one and two weeks of wage work will cover such emergencies. See Fig. 5.)

562 462 The women of Aguacatenango are economically dependent on their male relatives: father, husband, siblings and adult male children. The women have many responsibilities; they are in charge of cooking and cleaning, sewing the family clothes, gathering firewood for the hearth, and educating the young. They are also [231] [241] in charge of feeding the small livestock which is kept in the

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 77]

855 862 883 the elder child, except that they allow the child some freedom to run around the sitio, or go outside the sitio with other adults in order to go visiting.[1]

The adolescent children, especially those going to school, have complete freedom of movement within the community. They are sent to visit their grandmothers, to deliver little presents, or they are sent to ask for borrowed things. They also bring news and gossip back and forth between households. Their role as [585] messengers is sometimes formalized, as during weddings when children are sent ahead to announce the arrival of the bride, and her family, to the groom's household.

857 868 562 Pre-adolescent girls have the responsibility of caring for their younger siblings, and are initiated into the woman's work at an early age. They are trained by their mothers in making tortillas, carrying water, sweeping and sewing. They can go visiting on their own, and play outside the home with other girls before and after school, if they are regular school goers.

882 562 [291] After the first menstruation (and sometimes a little before if they show signs of maturity), they change from the light cotton skirt into the traditional dark blue nagua (tubular skirt) and red faja (sash), and are considered marriageable (solteritas or tek' el). At this point, they are expected to stay within the homestead grounds, except if they are told to bring water or if they go with compañía (company) to the afternoon rezo (praying

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[1] In extreme cases, when the elder child shows extreme signs of distress (crying long hours and refusing to eat anything), it will be given to a woman relative living in other household, usually the paternal grandmother or a married sister without children. This, however, is extremely rare.

882 562 584 session in Church). Water carrying is associated with courting and the bachelors stay around the paths that connect the houses of their sweethearts with the well to which they go to fetch water, expecting to receive some indication of acceptance on their part, and if they are literate, to hand them a love letter. Girls, on these occasions, are expected to behave modestly and to be embarrassed. If not, they are usually judged as alocadas (light-headed) and not fit for marriage.

156 571 The concept of tener su compañía runs throughout all activity, at all ages. Having company means protection from the supernatural on a long trip, help around the house, harmonious social relations with age mates and kinsmen, and insurance against loneliness. Older women who are left alone in a house for several days will "borrow" a younger girl, a son's daughter for example, to keep them company, and a young wife going to market or to get firewood is usually expected to find company to do so. If not, [153] she can well meet a strange man on the road, and get sick from verguenza (sickness assumed to originate from shame at being placed in an anomalous or embarrassing social situation) or espanto (fear and soul loss).

882 562 Boys (kerem and tek' el) do not have as many restrictions of behavior or of movement as girls after puberty, but they are [868] also expected to have their company. They start working with their fathers around the age of ten, depending on their physical strength, but in the beginning, it is not a serious occupation.

883 562 573 As soon as they become regular workers, they spend their free time with other bachelors and form a compañía or escuadrilla

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The reasons for keeping a son are not as pressing as the reasons for keeping a daughter. Amatenango land holdings are somewhat smaller than Aguacatenango, and the buying and selling of agricultural parcels, as long as it does not involve outsiders to the village, is a common practice which accounts for approximately 16 per cent of land transactions. The

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limited land holding units in Amatenango require minimal cooperation in agriculture. Because of fractured land holdings, fewer than one-half of the households have two tablones . . . of land. Therefore, fewer than one-half the households can keep more than one man actively employed. Even in those households with from two to five tablones, a man and his adult son are sufficient labor for most activities except harvest.

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Women's pottery production, however, requires frequent cooperation. Two tendencies are reinforcing the cooperation of women, especially of mothers and daughters: (1) with increasing need for cash income to buy products which are not longer produced in the home, or which have been introduced, money is constantly needed. Pottery offers an easy means of acquiring cash with almost immediate returns, and (2) marriages are currently contracted at a later age for girls than formerly. Before, about a generation ago, marriages at the age of eleven or twelve were the rule. Most of the intensive learning of pottery techniques begins at that age. Consequently, pottery was taught to the daughter by the mother-in-law if the girl was married and resided in the husband's house. (See Frans Blom and Oliver LaFarge [1927] who commented that all pottery was taught by the mother-in-law.) Most marriages now are contracted for girls from 14 to 17 years of age. At this time they are already proficient potters, and accustomed to working with their mother. Therefore, there is a greater stress put on their remaining in or near their parental home after marriage (Nash, J., 1960:47).[1]

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The people of Amatenango recognize that during the period in which a woman learns to make pottery, she establishes particular habits of cooperation and a strong solidarity bond with the woman from whom she learns and with whom she works. "Parents say that there is an advantage in early marriages, in that the girl would be more willing to learn the ways of her mother-in-law if she

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[1]It is also important to notice that with the increase in population over the area, the market has increased.

takes up residence in her husband's house" (Nash, J., 1960:28) at an age in which she is not fully trained in pottery production. At the same time, "mothers prefer to keep their daughters at home at least until the age of fourteen if there is no economic necessity in the family" (Nash, J., 1960:28).

Pottery production as a source of income is not equally important for all households. (1) Households with more children produce less pottery, because "child care compete with pottery making for a woman's time." (2) Households with more women produce more pottery because the different tasks of the woman: pottery making, child care, and house maintenance, can be best distributed among them during the day. (3) The motivation to work at pottery production is stronger in poorer households, "because alternative sources of income are less, and more of the family subsistence must come from pottery making." (4) Households with more men and land produce less pottery. First, land needs men to work it, and a single man cannot work much, or lay claim to government Ejido land of any considerable size. "In richer households (in terms of land and cattle) there is sufficient milpa raised that corn need not be bought, and the need for continuous cash income is not so pressing. This has also a circular effect: richer households tend to be able to keep more children alive; with more children to care for, women devote less time to pottery." "Conversely, poorer households depend upon pottery income, have fewer children, and less experience with prolonged periods of little or no pottery production" (Nash, M., 1961:188).

If the woman's work in pottery is a crucial factor in

8: Hunt E-4,5 (1958)1962 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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606 184 [593] a mother-in-law does not. The affective ties which develop with the nurturant figure are extremely durable, even though they seldom see each other after the daughter marries.

• [868] In Amatenango, perhaps because of early marriages which increase the nurturant aspect of the mother-in-law role (she certainly takes part in the socializstion of the daughter-in-law by teaching her how to make pottery), and because of the establishment of a relationship before the younger woman had many chances to establish adult affective ties with any woman other than her own mother, the mother-in-law-daughter-in-law bond is less tense. The women create a strong solidarity bond in their active cooperation in pottery making, and their association is both intense and constant. The result is that "a successful relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is not an authoritarian one, but is rather characterized by mutual cooperation" (Nash, J., 1960: 184 29, 62-67). We can also observe that the residence pattern 591 grants, in Aguacatenango, unconditional power to the mother-in-law, 606 while in Amatenango, where a woman after marriage can reside with 578 her own parents if she dislikes her in-laws, a mother-in-law is made to be more careful about her own behavior towards the younger woman. If she is too harsh, she can find herself with no female help in the house, and losing a son at the same time, which means that the household loses two laborers.